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Two flailing Carter appointees

President Carter has been impressive for the alacrity with which he concedes and corrects his own mistakes, but so far he has seemed distressingly tolerant of two bad personnel choices.

The CIA and Action, agencies with diverse but sensitive roles, are being ground into a morbid state of morale by the maladministration of the Carter appointees, Stansfield Turner and Samuel Brown. In both cases the damage to morale has stemmed from suspicions that they regard their

agencies as stepping-stones.

Hopes that Carter is moving to curb Turner, whose management decisions are highly controversial, have been stirred by the White House's insistence on naming Frank Carlucci as his deputy director. Turner wanted rotating deputies who would not intrude on him, but in Carlucci he will confront a strong and independent spirit.

Although a deputy can lean against the director's mistakes, he is unlikely, however, to change the

course of an ambitious admiral who pulls away from the voices of experience within the agency. Surrounded by an inner circle of his own selection and preoccupied with speeches and public relations gestures, Turner is not creating a climate in which he is likely to learn from his mistakes.

There is great commotion in both agencies, but much of it is change for the sake of change. In both places the new leadership has imposed reorganizations which are widely perceived as impulsive lurches that reflect the directors' anxiety to assert their power more than their concern with the morale and performance of their subordinates.

Reporters are bustling now around Washington to nail down allegations that Brown, who gained fame as a mobilizer of Vietnam protests, is using the agency as a personal vehicle. Embittered employees are anxious to show that Brown has been softening ground rules drafted to protect the volunteer spirit from sully involvement with the pressure groups.

The impact upon the Peace Corps, still lustrous after 17 years as an expression of American idealism, has been especially negative. To give validity to his

boast that he has rescued the Peace Corps from the oblivion of the Nixon-Ford years, he has given top priority to efforts to swell the numbers of volunteers dispatched to developing nations.

In every change of administration, the newcomers are tempted by what is known to civil servants as "re-inventing the wheel." This is an exercise in which the newly installed administrators discard the experience of their predecessors in order to gain the look of innovators. It is part of the price of democracy.

But the silliness at Action and CIA reflects more than the usual ego exertions and is causing more than the usual damage. Turner took over the CIA at a delicate point, when it had begun, under George Bush, to recover from the trauma of a national re-thinking of intelligence activities. The Peace Corps had been submerged by its incorporation into Action, so it was particularly vulnerable to the adversities and neglect of the past 11 months.

Bad performances by key appointees pose a vexing problem for presidents. But the unhappiness in these two agencies is swelling to a point at which it deserves to be weighed against Carter's instinct to be loyal to these two men.

